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GUIDELINES FOR INITIATING AN R AND I UNIT.

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REPORT NUMBER BR-5-0216-WP-1 PUB DATE 66
CONTRACT OEC-5-10-154
EDRS PRICE MF-$0.09 HC-$1.40 35P.

DESCRIPTORS- TEACHING GUIDES, *CURRICULUM GUIDES, CURRICULUM DEVELOPMENT, RESOURCE GUIDES, *INSTRUCTIONAL IMPROVEMENT, *TEACHING TECHNIQUES, EXPERIMENTAL PROGRAMS, EDUCATIONAL OPPORTUNITIES, DEMONSTRATION PROGRAMS, *RESEARCH AND DEVELOPMENT CENTERS, *LEARNING PROCESSES, EDUCATIONAL RESEARCH, INSTRUCTIONAL INNOVATION, MADISON, WISCONSIN

GUIDELINES FOR INITIATING A RESEARCH AND INSTRUCTION UNIT WITHIN A SCHOOL WERE PRESENTED. THE PROGRAM FOR ESTABLISHING THE UNITS WAS DEVELOPED TO (1) SECURE MORE EFFICIENT LEARNING BY STUDENTS (2) ENCOURAGE PERSONALITY DEVELOPMENT, AND (3) PROVIDE OPPORTUNITIES FOR RESEARCH, CONTROLLED EXPERIMENTATION, AND DEVELOPMENT OF INSTRUCTIONAL PROGRAMS. A UNIT WOULD BE COMPOSED OF A LEARNING SPECIALIST TO LEAD THE UNIT, ONE OR MORE ADDITIONAL CERTIFIED TEACHERS, AND ONE OR MORE PARAPROFESSIONAL PERSONNEL DEPENDING ON THE NUMBER OF STUDENTS. THE OPERATION OF THE UNIT IS PLANNED TO USE THE BEST ELEMENTS OF TEAM TEACHING, COOPERATIVE PLANNING OF THE INSTRUCTIONAL PROGRAM, FLEXIBLE SCHEDULING, EFFICIENT USE OF MATERIALS, AND INDIVIDUAL STRENGTHS OF THE STAFF MEMBERS TO DEVELOP AND EXECUTE EXEMPLARY INSTRUCTIONAL PROGRAMS. (AL)

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WP-1

WORKING PAPER NO. 1

GUIDELINES FOR INITIATING AN R & I UNIT

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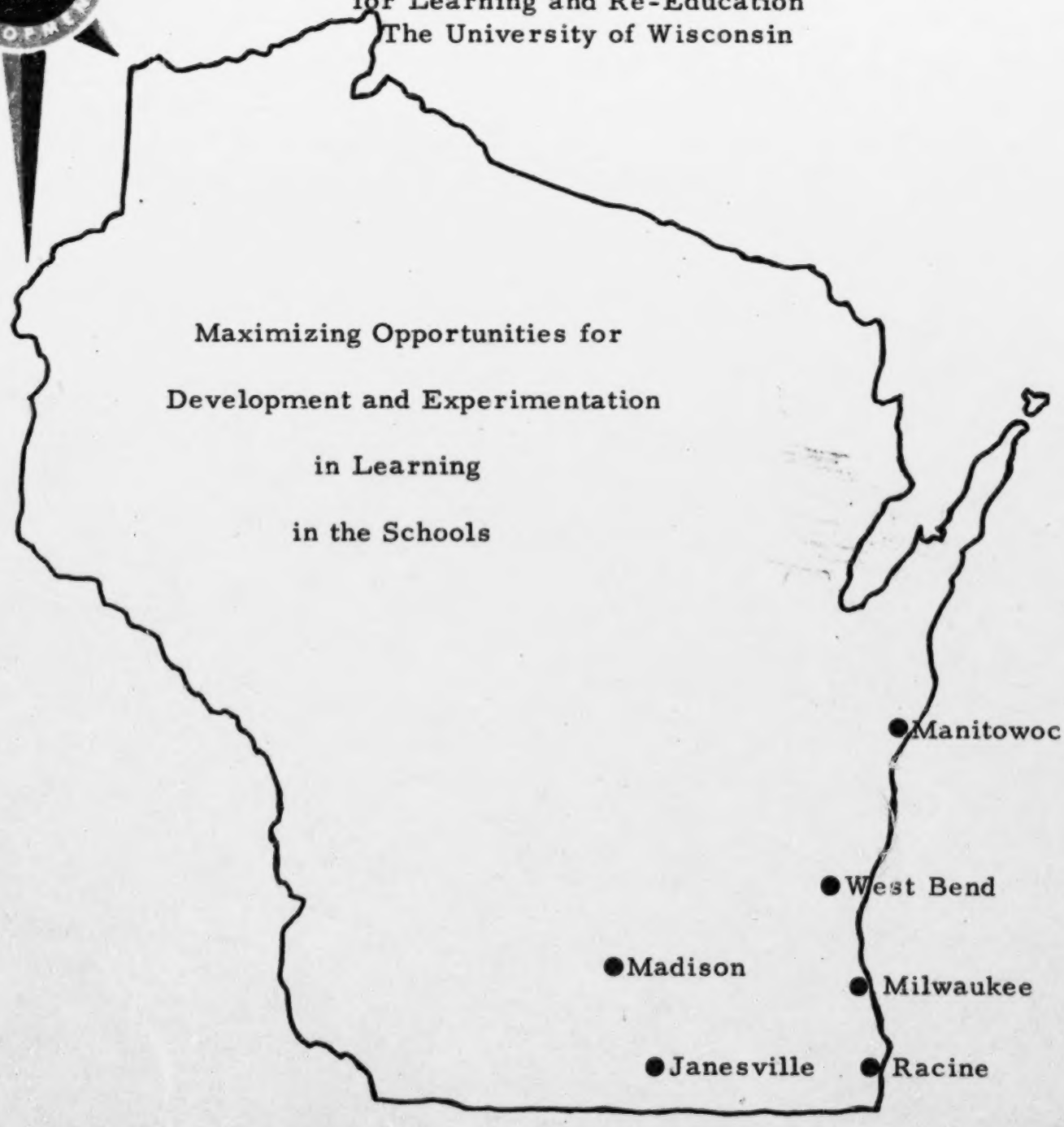
for Learning and Re-Education
The University of Wisconsin

Maximizing Opportunities for

Development and Experimentation

in Learning

in the Schools



The project development reported herein was performed pursuant to a contract with the United States Office of Education, Department of Health, Education, and Welfare, under the provisions of the Cooperative Research Program.

Center No. C-03 / Contract OE 5-10-154

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FOREWORD

In the second semester of 1965-1966, there were 17 R & I Units formed in 4 school systems--Janesville, Madison, Racine, and West Bend. In the fall of 1966-1967, about 40 were started in the same school systems and in Manitowoc and Milwaukee. The rough idea of this type of organization emerged from meetings between R and D staff and the Schools Planning Group of the R and D Center during 1964-1965. The concept and practices were refined through experiences of the same groups and are still being refined through experience and more formal evaluation. We think that sufficient experience has been gained to warrant this publication for use in local schools with R & I Units affiliated with the R and D Center. The guidelines are tentative, however, and need continuous refinement and adaptation in the local situation.

Tel. No. for R and D Center:

(Area Code 608)-262-4901

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Encourage

Optimal

Personality

Development

1. WHAT IS THE NATURE OF AN R & I UNIT?

From its inception on September 1, 1964, the goal of the R and D Center of Wisconsin has been to secure efficient learning of

children, youth, and adults in the cognitive domain and simultaneously to encourage optimal personality development. To implement this main goal and to deal with matters of mutual concern to the Center, the local school systems, and the State Department of Public Instruction, Project MODELS (Maximizing Opportunities for Development and Experimentation in Learning in the Schools) was initiated in 1965-66 as a cooperative research and development program of the R and D Center and selected school systems. This program represents the invention of a new organization within the school building called the Research and Instruction Unit (R & I Unit) or instructional team, and a new role within the unit--that of the unit leader, or Learning Specialist.

2. WHAT IS THE COMPOSITION OF AN R & I UNIT?

One or more R & I Units may be formed within a school building. Each R & I Unit is headed by a learning specialist or unit leader who assumes leadership and is responsible to the building principal for the learning efficiency of the students in the unit and for the coordination of instructional and research activities of the unit.

Learning specialists or unit leaders further act as a liaison between the R & I Unit and the building principal, the staff of the central administration, other R & I Units, R and D Center staff, and parents.

An R & I Unit may be composed of two or more certified teachers and one or more paraprofessional personnel, depending upon the number of students. This number must be proportioned carefully so that efficient instruction is carried on in the classroom yet at the same time an opportunity for flexible scheduling is provided. It is necessary that the learning specialist and teacher are able to work simultaneously with individual students and small groups. In addition, members of the R & I Unit must have time to confer together.

3. WHAT ARE FUNCTIONS OF R & I UNITS?

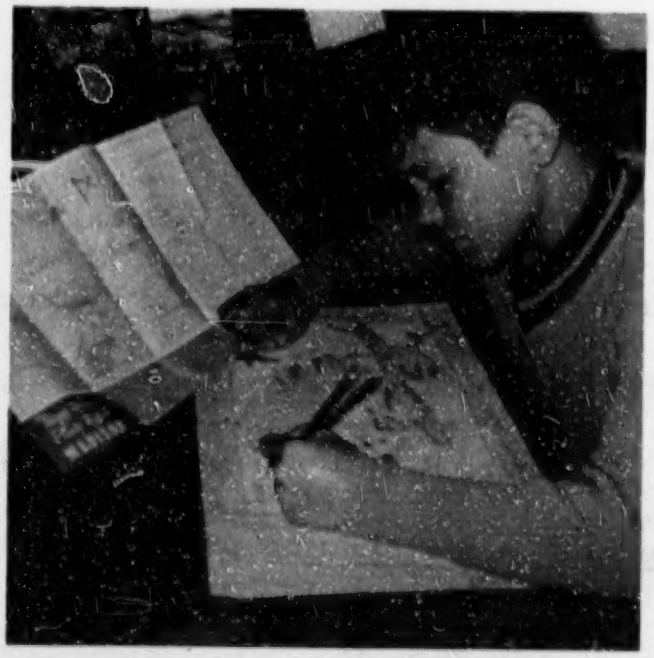
The R & I Unit has several functions, not all of which are simultaneously executed well by any other current instructional organization or individual classroom teacher.

Promoting efficient pupil learning through developing and executing an exemplary instructional program is the primary function of

Promote

Individual

Learning



the R & I Unit. Each unit attempts to provide excellent instruction for each of its students. The best elements of team teaching, cooperative planning of the instructional program, utilizing the strengths of all the staff, flexible scheduling, efficient use of materials, and the like are characteristic of the instructional program in an R & I Unit. An exemplary instructional program is not installed in a school overnight and maintained indefinitely. Rather it is continuously evolving through a program of research, development, innovation, and diffusion. It is these functions which set it off sharply from any structure now existing in the schools. The unit provides a unique organization to carry out controlled experimentation and other research on any element of an instructional program, such as content, methods, material, and media. It also functions within the school to conduct the research that is essential to establishing and maintaining a continuous exemplary instructional system. The R and D Center staff assist the unit personnel in planning, executing, and reporting research, for it is not assumed that the R & I Unit staff can plan and execute research independently.

Refining effective motivational techniques, improving teaching procedures, identifying appropriate instructional goals, and constructing tests are some of the developmental functions of an R & I Unit.

Further, R & I Units within a school system serve as a facility for innovating and evaluating promising practices and materials

before widespread or costly innovation throughout a system is attempted.

Previously, schools have not always been able to disseminate promising practicing effectively among their own teaching staffs. The R & I Unit serves as a laboratory for testing innovations, with the learning specialist and other members of the unit disseminating information to other teachers in the school building and perhaps in the entire system.

4. WHAT IS THE ROLE OF THE LEARNING SPECIALIST OR UNIT LEADER?

Responsibilities and characteristics of the learning specialist and other personnel are outlined briefly in a Center publication, Project MODELS,[1] not as final conclusions, but as emerging spiraling concepts being developed by the Center staff and school people. The learning specialist serves as the leader of the unit in executing all the functions of the unit. Although leadership areas are spelled out specifically in Project MODELS, this in no way reduces the opportunities or responsibilities of teachers of the unit or of other school personnel. In all

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[1]Klausmeier, Herbert J., William L. Goodwin, John Prasch, and Max R. Goodson, Project MODELS: Maximizing Opportunities for Development and Experimentation in Learning in the Schools, Occasional Paper No. 3 of the Research and Development Center for Learning and Re-Education, The University of Wisconsin, Madison, Wisconsin (U.S. Office of Education Center No. C-03 / Contract OE 5-10-154).

areas, the learning specialist first works closely with teachers of the unit.

Cooperative Planning

5. WHAT IS THE ROLE OF THE TEACHER OF AN R & I UNIT?

Inherent in an effective R & I Unit is an increased degree of flexibility for teacher responsibility, grouping, and an increased opportunity to provide the best instruction for the children. None of this can be accomplished without the sincere effort of each teacher.

The R & I Unit presents a challenge to the teachers involved by encouraging the exchange of ideas. Feedback from other teachers and opportunities to try new ways of doing things stimulate and motivate the teachers to do great things.

One distinguishing characteristic of a teacher joining an R & I Unit is his willingness to cooperate fully with other members of the unit. This is a major factor in determining who may or may not be a good member of a unit. A teacher must want to teach in a cooperative venture such as this. She must not fear her loss of autonomy. For, similar to the medical profession, the major objectives are planned and evaluated jointly, but the teacher is free and encouraged to use the techniques with which she has the most success. The joint planning and evaluating are vital to a complete understanding of the teaching-learning process.

Time

to

Plan

6. WHAT IS THE ROLE OF THE NONCERTIFIED PERSONNEL OF THE UNIT?

The R & I Unit provides the teacher aide a rewarding opportunity for working directly with each teacher of the unit. An aide identified with a unit shall first be responsible to the school principal, then to the learning specialist, who can provide some individual guidance and training. The learning specialist will be in a position to spread the capabilities and time of the aide over the entire unit. In some cases the aide may be utilized in one subject area by all the teachers. In other cases the aide will be used throughout the entire daily program.

Instruction Secretary

The aides in the R & I Units should keep all information relative to pupils' behaviors, grades, and test scores confidential. Hopefully, they will be enthusiastic about the entire idea and will cooperate fully in developing the best possible instructional program.

Initiating Units in a School System

7. WHAT ARE THE STEPS FOR INITIATING UNITS IN A SCHOOL SYSTEM?

Central Staff Involvement

The initial step in developing R & I Units in cooperation with the R and D Center is an invitation from the Co-Director for Research of the R and D Center to a chief school officer of a local school system. A meeting is then held involving the school superintendent, other school officials invited by the superintendent, the Co-Directors of the Research and Development Center, and other staff of Project MODELS. Board of Education personnel, building principals, and others may be invited to an initial meeting at the discretion of the superintendent. This meeting is intended to clarify:

(1) Relationships between the Research and Development Center and the local school system.

(2) Possible organization and functions of an R & I Unit.

(3) The supporting roles of the R and D Center and the school system in the operation of an R & I Unit.

(4) Characteristics and role of the learning specialist, teachers, and other members of the unit.

When a mutually satisfactory arrangement is agreed upon, next steps vary markedly, depending upon the size of the school system. In general, the central administration arranges meetings as soon as possible within the school system, usually including an R and D staff member, in order to discuss as follows:

(1) Determining the number of units to be formed, their location in specific schools, grade level, and similar matters.

(2) Planning the necessary meetings to initiate the idea to all personnel involved. When the idea is first introduced, it is important to inform the entire school system about Project MODELS.

(3) Identifying a person or persons who, from the central staff, will assume major responsibility for the program.

(4) Identifying unit leaders or learning specialists.

(5) Selecting other personnel for each unit.

(6) Assuring that building principals participate early in the planning so that they can exercise their usual leadership and responsibility for this part of the building's program.

Support from the Principal

Responsibilities of the Building Principal

To insure the future success of the R & I Unit, the building principal must have the support of central administration and must understand and value the possibilities inherent in the R & I Unit for him to exercise leadership in improving instruction. This understanding can be gained through a meeting of building principals with R and D personnel and designated central staff. At this meeting much of the orientation information given to the central staff could be repeated. The R and D staff should resolve any problems and assure the building principal of the availability of the R and D resources.

The building principal will then need to look at these specific responsibilities:

(1) Arrange for building meetings to include himself, learning specialist, unit members, and a representative of the R and D Center as necessary in order to assure that the unit functions well and offers excellent instruction to the students.

(2) Meet with and provide initial support to the learning specialist in clarifying role and responsibility of the specialist and other members of the unit.

(3) Provide support and encouragement in the early stages both to the unit and to the individuals as well. Be sensitive to the mixed feelings involved.

(4) Assert leadership in informing all the school personnel in the building of the R & I Unit concept and the relationship of the unit to the rest of the staff.

(5) Recognize outstanding activities of individual teachers and utilize them in the R & I Unit.

(6) Arrange for regular meetings of the staff of the R & I Unit. The principal can encourage and initiate unit planning if at first he will sit in on planning sessions with the unit and provide support.

(7) Provide adequate facilities, materials, and equipment for the unit to function properly. Each member of the unit needs space in which to teach, although not necessarily a classroom.

(8) Encourage joint meetings of learning specialists in units of various school buildings.

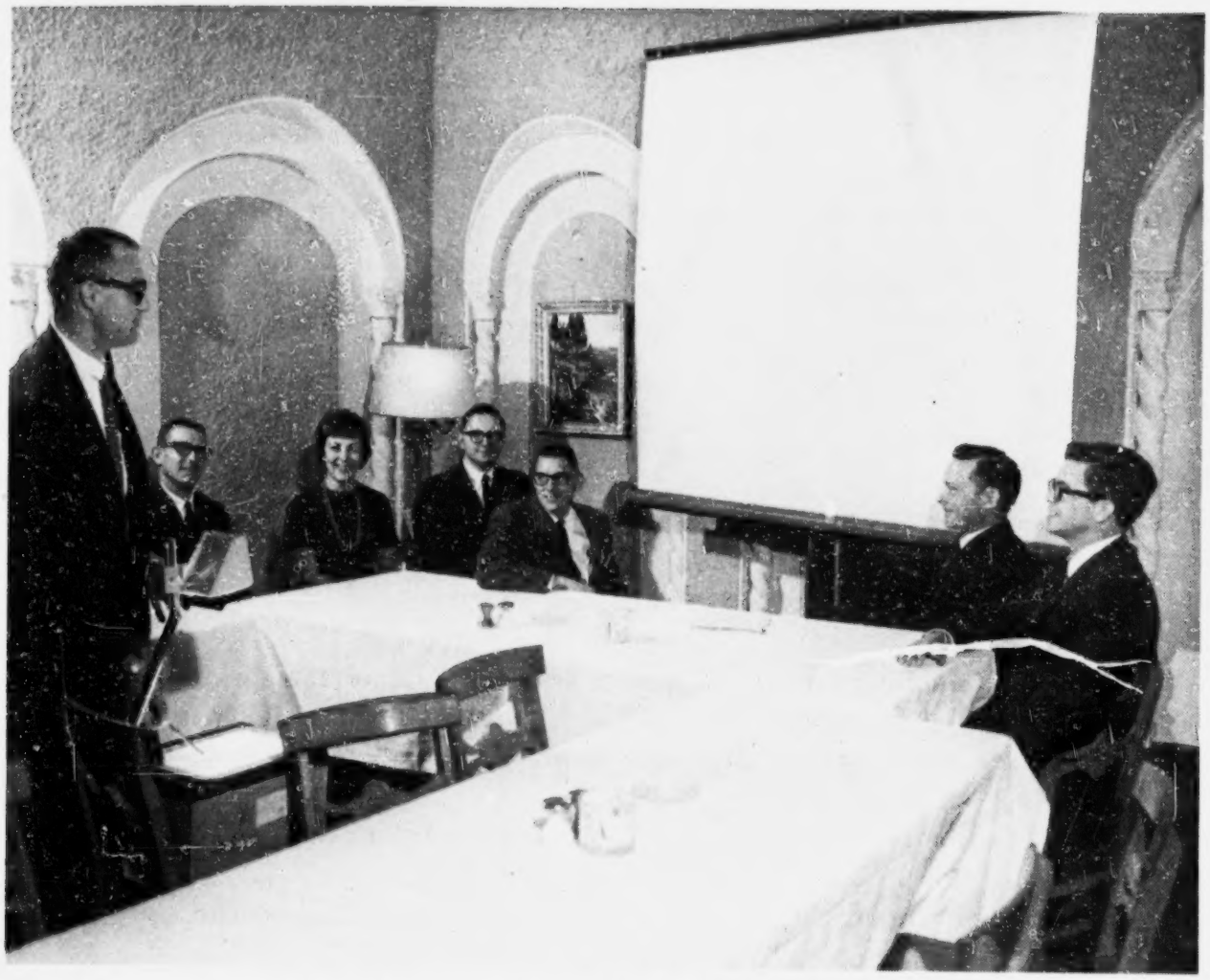
Learning Specialist and Teacher Involvement

The learning specialist and his fellow teachers should receive the same orientation that has been received by the others. Of extreme importance is the support of R and D personnel and all central staff personnel who may have any future relationship to the new R & I Unit. This is the most crucial meeting in terms of understanding the differentiation of roles and responsibilities of the R and D Center, the central staff, the learning specialists, and the teachers.

8. WHAT CONDITIONS ARE ESSENTIAL FOR EFFECTIVE R & I UNITS?

Responsibilities of Central Staff

The enthusiasm and support of the central staff for the project needs to be apparent not only at the initial stages but throughout the year. The central administration has a responsibility to assume leadership in several areas. The manner in which this is done and by whom varies with the size and other characteristics of the local school school system. These are:



Support from Central Staff

(1) Providing resource assistance. Progress in the first units shows the importance of central administration leadership not only in recognizing the responsibilities but also for providing available resource staff as needed.

(2) Providing encouragement and support for experimentation. Participating in a conference with the personnel of the unit at the initial identification of a research problem can furnish support and enthusiasm for the experiment. Often the central staff representative can suggest subject specialists available on the staff for consultation. It is important for the central staff to approve the use of and make provisions for texts or materials other than the ones which are prescribed.

(3) Provide released time for learning specialists and teachers. It has been apparent in the first R & I Units that some released time should be available for the learning specialists and teachers to confer jointly. Also, throughout the year opportunities should be provided for the learning specialist and teachers to attend worthwhile seminars and workshops.

(4) Providing open lines of communication. Desirable climate in an R & I Unit is not possible without free-flowing communication between the personnel of the unit, the building principal, and the central staff. It is important for the central staff to establish open avenues of communication by planning joint meetings with the learning specialists, building principals, teachers, and at least one representative from the central administration.

(5) Planning for flexibility. The R & I Unit provides an opportunity for flexible scheduling not possible in the self-contained classroom. This can become a reality when the central staff releases time for the learning specialist and the teachers of the unit to jointly plan the instructional program.

(6) Clarifying roles of teachers and other personnel. The roles of the individuals within the R & I Unit should be clarified explicitly so that everyone's expectation for individual rules may be clarified. This must be done so teachers of the unit will know whom to contact and work with under various circumstances and, equally important, so that the learning specialist or leader of the unit will be able to work effectively.

(7) Providing coordination. Just how much coordination from the central offices is necessary or is effective cannot be determined. Past experiences in the units clearly define a need for the central administration to participate actively in relating the idea to the proper people on the central staff and also to interpret the needs of the unit and provide support. Much of the coordination can be handled through the principal. It is important for the central administration to delegate clearly this responsibility to the principal.

Responsibilities of Building Principal

The principal is the key person in providing an atmosphere for an effective unit. Further, an R & I Unit at each primary and intermediate level in an elementary school, for example, will open new

avenues for him to exercise leadership in the instructional program.

He needs to assume leadership and initiative by:

(1) Providing physical facilities. The principal must analyze the physical facilities and provide working space for the learning specialist and the aide, just as he would the classroom teacher. He may well decide to locate the R & I Unit in an area that is conducive to both large and small group instruction, where audio-visual equipment is available.

(2) Scheduling for flexibility. The principal in the initial scheduling should try to set up a period when all of the R & I staff are available for planning. Also, where non-certified personnel are available, the teacher can be relieved of some routine duties, thereby having more time for instruction and planning.

(3) Extending the school year for planning. While this decision may well be the responsibility of the central administration, the principal can initiate ideas and reasons for holding such planning sessions. He should also assert leadership and support in obtaining reimbursement for the teachers attending such meetings.

(4) Locating and providing instructional materials. A variety of curriculum materials which might strengthen or extend the teachers' planning and instruction should be available. Local school systems see the opportunity to evaluate new texts, etc., in an R & I Unit before adopting a series school wide. The R & I Unit provides a setting to try out several approaches and test as well as to acquaint teachers with more than one approach to teaching a subject. The principal should be open to suggestions and requests of the learning specialist and teachers. The procedure for ordering new materials should be clearly defined.

(5) Arranging for in-service meetings. The principal can work with the learning specialist in arranging the time and place for workshops and seminars where teachers of the school, of other units, central staff, or university consultants are requested.

(6) Participate in identifying research problems.

Coordinate Efforts of Individual Teachers

Responsibilities of Learning Specialist

The learning specialist, in addition to the general responsibilities listed previously, also has opportunity, through planning with unit members and others for:

(1) Identifying and solving instructional problems. Alertness to the entire unit, individual classes, and also individual teachers' concerns can help overcome the obstacles.

(2) Coordinating efforts of individual teachers. The separate efforts of each unit member must be channeled into a purpose. The learning specialist is in a position to coordinate the elements of personnel, purpose, activities, meeting times, resource use, reports, tests, etc.

(3) Communicating and sharing ideas from one unit to another. Ideas should be exchanged between units in the same building and between buildings. Ideas from one unit can generate enthusiasm and promote unity in another unit.

(4) Securing consultants. Most of the units require special competencies of a subject consultant in developing educational programs. Often subject consultants from the local central staff are available, or the learning specialist may request consultants from the R and D Center.

(5) Locating and providing instructional materials. The learning specialist should have the time and the facilities for exploring new and better materials which might strengthen the instructional program. The extensive reservoir of curriculum materials often never reaches the classroom teachers. Often reviewing the literature or a similar study provides an insight for the teachers in their special problems.

(6) Counseling with individual teachers. These types of sessions, often informal, are the means by which a learning specialist simply lends a sympathetic ear. This is most effective if done along with regular group meetings. Caution must be taken that such meetings do not destroy the joint planning or unity of the group. It is easy for a learning specialist to become a remedial or special help teacher to each individual staff member of the unit. At times, however, individual conferences are of value.

(7) Helping unit members work cooperatively as a team. The learning specialist should be sensitive to his function of utilizing all staff members and developing in the members of the unit an unsophisticated group sensitivity whereby each will feel free to share and compare ideas as well as teaching.

9. WHAT ARE THE PROCEDURES FOR INITIATING A RESEARCH PROJECT IN THE UNIT?

The preceding discussion has been concerned mostly with matters of organization and instruction. This is proper since the primary function of each R & I Unit is to develop and maintain an exemplary or model instructional program. The research, development, and innovation functions of an R & I Unit are closely related to these

same matters. In general, the staff of the R & I Unit and other members of the local school system will generate ideas for research projects of a practical nature, directly related to the instructional program of the Unit and local school system. The R & I Unit also serves as a facility or laboratory of the R and D Center for research in human learning in school settings. Thus, the Center staff also generates ideas for research. Regardless of where the research ideas originate, these points are paramount: First, the research will deal with instructional matters or variables; second, the planning of any research project in any unit will involve a member of the central staff of the local school, the building principal, the learning specialist, and a member of the R and D Center; and third, the Center will provide assistance, even exercise initiative as feasible, in delineating a project and defining the instructional treatments, outlining the research design, planning the measurement devices, performing statistical analyses of data, and writing reports. Local school personnel, as time and capabilities warrant, may assume more initiative and responsibility for any or all of the preceding. Depending upon the size and staff of the local school, a research director or other central staff member may represent the central staff in planning research projects.

The next suggestions are more specific regarding the preceding general procedures.

(1) Identify Significant Problem Areas

Ideas for research may arise in several ways. During regular unit planning discussions, common concerns and ideas are shared which may make a significant problem evident. Individual teachers may have contacts with new ideas through conferences, meetings, and classes. The R and D Center encourages the local school to identify the problem according to the needs and significance for local situations. The Center will provide support and consultation in appropriate procedure for experimentation. Also, the Center staff in meetings with the unit and other school staff will propose ideas for consideration.

(2) Select and Define the Problem

From the potential research ideas which have been identified, one area should be selected which is most crucial to the effectiveness of the unit. This area of concern may then be discussed in a meeting between the building principal, the R and D coordinator, the learning specialist, and a member of the central staff. The purpose of this meeting is to define the research problem more specifically.

Questions which should be considered are the following:

1. What are the specific questions to be answered by the research?
2. Who will participate in the experiment? Students? Teachers? Others?

3. What are the instructional treatments or independent variables which will be employed?
4. What time allotments are planned for the experiment? How much time per day and how many days per week will be needed for the treatment? How long will the experiment run?
5. What effects of the experiment are you concerned with? Educational attainment? Attitudes? Other behaviors?
6. What measures will be used to ascertain the outcome of the experiment? Published tests? Teacher-made tests? Teacher observations and ratings?
7. What standardized tests are normally administered to students in the unit? When?
8. What space and equipment is available for the experiment?

(3) Design the Experiment

When the problem is well defined, the learning specialist, R and D coordinator, and building principal will confer with a design consultant from the R and D Center. The purpose of this conference is to develop a specific experimental design which will meet the requirements of statistical analysis and, at the same time, be feasible in the school situation. At this meeting it may be wise to include a consultant from the specific subject area, either from the local staff or from the R and D Center.

Planning for Experimentation

(4) Implementation of the Experiment

Following the meeting with the research consultant on the plan for a design to be used, the R and D coordinator and the learning specialist may then devise an outline (or a working paper) for implementing the experiment. This working paper would include any grouping of students, rotating teachers, pre-testing and post-testing, etc. Specific plans for any pre-testing will need to be set up.

The final procedure would then be for a meeting of the unit personnel involved and the R and D coordinator to sit down and go over the specific plans to get the experiment under way.

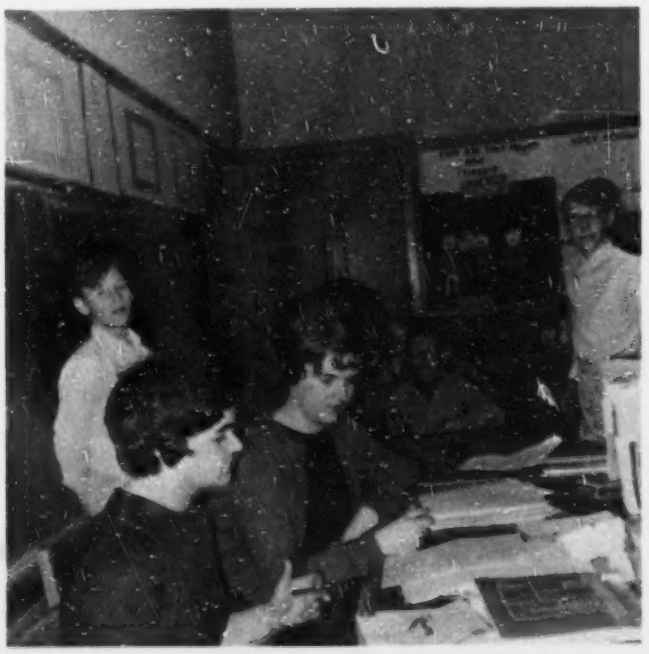
(5) Interest in and Support of the Experiment

The teachers carrying on the experiment must know that they have the interest and support of the learning specialist, the principal, and those with whom he is working. The learning specialist needs to assert initiative in providing continuous coordination of the experiment by working with the teachers and the R and D Center in whatever way is necessary to further the study. He may need to work with the teachers in the unit on keeping logs or anecdotal records, in planning appropriate materials suitable for the experiment, or in scheduling the teachers or students.

(6) Effective Communication Among Participants

One great criticism by teachers of researchers is the lack of feedback. The learning specialist needs to develop functional lines of communication to promote sharing. He might do this by small

Develop Lines of Communication



staff meetings, informal conferences, or interclassroom visits where teachers may observe. He should make an effort to see that feedback about the data reaches the classroom teacher involved in the experiment.

(7) Amount and Complexity of Research

It is well to start with a relatively small-scale, noncomplex research problem, to concentrate on an instructional program in all areas and on research in one area. After experience, perhaps two research projects per semester might be pursued.

The R and D Center proposes that the first research project should be one of significance to the staff, preferably originating with them. In the design, the R and D staff will generally try to incorporate one treatment that provides for individualized instruction, regardless of the subject area.

APPENDIXES

The forms presented in Appendixes A and B may be obtained from:

Informational Services
Research and Development Center
for Learning and Re-Education
1404 Regent Street
The University of Wisconsin
Madison, Wisconsin 53706

Telephone: R and D Center staff may be called at (Area Code 608)-262-4901.

Appendix A

RESEARCH AND DEVELOPMENT CENTER
FOR LEARNING AND RE-EDUCATION
THE UNIVERSITY OF WISCONSIN
1404 Regent Street
Madison, Wisconsin 53706

Name of School _____

Address _____
Street City

Phone _____ Area Code _____

Learning Specialist _____

Principal _____

ORGANIZATION OF R & I UNIT:

Grade level or levels _____

Personnel of the unit (list all names):

Student population: Total _____; Number in control group, if any _____

Approximate number of disadvantaged students: _____

In what areas of curriculum are you planning experimentation: _____

_____

When do you plan experiment to begin? _____

What time has been set aside for a weekly meeting of the entire unit?

_____

Please enclose a copy of your school calendar, schedule of classes within the unit, and a copy of Learning Specialist Schedule. As soon as time permits, a complete list of basic texts or course of study used in the R & I Unit should be sent.

GUIDELINES FOR PLANNED EXPERIMENTATION IN R & I UNITS*

Name of Learning Specialist_____

Grade Levels of Unit_____

School, City_____

Possible number of students in entire unit_____

Number of teachers in unit_____

Space facilities (number of classrooms) available for experiment_____

_____

_____

I. The Problem: State the problem in the form of a specific question or questions to be answered.

II. Subjects: Indicate how many students, parents, etc., will be the subjects of the experiment and give salient characteristics such as age or grade level, sex, etc.

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*Although the learning specialist typically will complete this form, the R & D staff will assist with ideas and actual work concerning each main point.

III. Treatments

A. Outline the instructional treatments or independent variables. Here the specific different instructional programs are to be outlined in sufficient detail that each relevant teacher of the unit can execute them.

IV. Time Allotments

A. How much time per day and how many days per week are needed or planned for the treatment?

B. Estimate the length of the experiment, e.g., a month, semester, year--

V. Dependent Variables

Describe or list the dependent variables, e.g., educational attainment, attitudes, other behaviors, etc.

VI. What published tests, teacher-made tests, teacher observations, and ratings, etc., will be used to assess the effects of the independent variables? Here it is important to identify evaluation instruments and procedures related to each dependent variable above. In general, standardized educational achievement tests are not sensitive to local research projects of short duration.

VII. List the standardized tests normally administered at the grade or school level of this unit and the month the test was administered. The regular testing program of the school is excellent for securing baseline information and long-term evaluation information.